CLXV

THE PAPISTS New-fashion'd Allegiance:

A LETTER

Lately seiz'd in the House of an Eminent *Roman Catholick* in *Hereford-shire*, and produced at the late ASSIZES there held:

Written by Father *HARCOURT* the Jesuit, lately Executed; Concerning taking the Oaths of *Supremacy* and *Allegiance*.

UPon a late search in *Herefordshire*, the ensuing Letter was found by a Justice of the Peace in a Papist's House, very choicely laid up amongst a parcel of Crucifixes, Reliques, and Popish Trinkets: It was written *as from a Woman*, as some Expressions would make one believe; But both the Matter, Style and Character, evidently shew'd it to be in Truth from some *Jesuit or Popish Priest*, who now commonly maintain their Correspondencies in the Names, and by the Mediation of their *Female-Disciples*. For as that Sex is by Nature ignorant, *Superstitious*, and pertinacious in their Opinions; so these crafty Seducers imitating their Father, the *Original Deceiver*, make special use of these *weaker Vessels*, to imbibe and propagate their false Doctrines.

The Author of this Epistle therefore, is generally reported, and on good grounds believ'd to be no other than that late Executed Traitor, *Father W. Harcourt*, the Jesuit, as well because the Letters of the Name subscribed, agree with his; and that 'tis certain he was intimately Familiar in that Family, and at that time sculking up and down the Country; as also, because some acquainted with his Hand-writing, conclude it to be of the same Character. And though the matter thereof seem to be good and commendable, as persuading,

ding, or if you please, giving leave to Papists, to do that which in it self is most *lawful*, and no more than their *Duty*, yet the manner and grounds on which this is here advised, evidently demonstrate, that 'tis done meerly to serve a present Turn, and elude the Law by Swearing in such an abstruse Equivocating sence, as renders the Government never the more secure: The necessary preservation whereof, was the grand end for which these Oaths were originally enjoyn'd, and still impos'd.——The Letter follows.

Dear Cousin,

I *Am glad to hear you continue so well after your hard Bargain, for I was afraid all our Friends had been quite lost, they have been so disturbed and Letters are so uncertain, that one dares not trust any but by a special Messenger, and scarce so. I might have been as happy as you, but the sudden Frights of Searchers, which I fear'd might have plunder'd us All, and hurried my good Gentleman to* London, *caused a* Miscarriage, *which went harder with me than Child-bearing. The Times are sad at present, but we ought not to despond*, a little Patience may mend all. *My privacy affords but little News, and how the* Great Wheel *turns, I am not certain, but hope and pray for the best. We are all well as yet, at our little* Pathmos, *and after serious Examination and Advise, which we think fit to communicate to you, and the rest of our Friends, Approve of it* as requisite *for a Catholick man to express his true Loyalty in such Circumstances to his King by taking the* Oaths, *when necessitated thereunto. For though there be much* harshness *in the words, as to exclude our Acknowledgment and Adherence by Faith and Obedience unto our purely Spiritual Head; yet* since we be admitted to make our own Sence, *as indeed, whoever Swears cannot be hindred by any words impos'd from Swearing, in such Sense as is agreeable to his own understanding; so that here we only swear within such bounds as the Catholick Church and our Duty allows, that is, only acknowledging a Temporal Power over Spirituals, as in Contentious Courts due to the Temporal Sword, and not in* Foro Conscientiæ, *as by the Proviso in the Statute* Quinto Elizabethæ *may be seen.*

Therefore to take off this Ignominious Censure *of denying our Allegiance, and let the World know, that we may give to* Cæsar *what is his due, we may not refuse the Oaths when legally tendered, especially* at such a time *when Catholicks lye under so many Suspicions and Scandals, in point of Loyalty, which 'tis an indispensable Duty, incumbent upon us all, to prevent to the utmost of our power, and this especially when we are not compelled* to the Rigour of the words, as formerly, *but only to allow His Majesty a Supream, Temporal Power in Spiritual things, and not a purely Spiritual Power, which is due only to the Supream Spiritual Pastor of our Souls. Without denying God his Right, we may attribute in a* sound Sence *to the King, that Spiritual Coercive Power, which he or his Ancestors gave to the Church. Now he claims it to himself, and with more Justice than the first Framer of one of these Oaths that began it by Pillaging the Church, and usurping its Power: For he now quietly possesses*

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the Church-Livings, and had not he the Authority in the Spiritual Courts, upon every disagreeing, the obstinately Contentious or best monied Litigants *would appeal to* Rome, *which would be as inconvenient to our Peace, as those harsh words, which some devout Catholicks now scruple at, though without reason, when their ghostly Instructors have signified their Concurrence, &c. For when the* SWEET LENITIVE *is admitted, by owning the King hath such a Temporal Coercive Power over Spirituals, we do not deny the purely Spiritual Power of our Supream Pastor. As for Example, The Pope creates a Bishop, and gives him Power to administer Sacraments; This was the Power of the Keys given to St.* Peter *by our Saviour: But 'twas* Constantine *gave St.* Sylvester *his Temporal Command, and had* Constantius *his Son, reassum'd it again, he had but destroy'd his Father's gift. Now then when all the Lands be in the Crown, we may acknowledge the King the Supream Head, and as they be called* Spiritual Livings, *because they belonged to the Church; so he may not improperly be styled a* Spiritual Head, *that has Command of them, which at his Pleasure he may again bestow upon Spiritual Persons. This is what I thought fit to signifie to you at present on this matter, wherein you desired Directions, and might have been more plain, would the Times have born it. I should be heartily glad to hear from you as often as you can, but you know the necessary Cautions. Pray present my Duty to my Aunt; And so with my Prayers to Almighty God for you all, and most Cordial Love remembred, I ever am*

April the 12th. 1679.

Your most Affectionate Cousin

W. H.

This was printed in August 1679

FINIS.

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Though this Letter be written in ſo ſtrange and affected cloudy Style, and thoſe words, *Miſcarriage*, *Child-bearing*, *Husband*, &c. caſt in to make it the better paſs for a Woman's Penning, which yet poſſibly may have ſome other determinate meaning, well known by Confederacy amongſt the Correſpondents; yet the main drift of it ſeems plain enough to be the ſignification of ſome Diſpenſation lately granted to *Engliſh* Papiſts, to take the Oaths, and this merely ſuited to the preſent Juncture of Affairs, to avoid the Penalties of the Laws, prevent Scandal, and poſſeſs Proteſtants with a good opinion of their Loyalty: The better to diſpoſe zealous and ſcrupulous Roman Catholicks thereunto, here is the uſe of Equivocation recommended, and ſuch an unaccountable diſtinction framed about Temporal Power in Spirituals, and that ſo warily laid down, that the Jeſuits may at any time give a different or clean contrary Interpretation, whenever Opportunity and their Intereſt ſhall require it. By theſe, and the like dealings of theſe Men, we may evidently perceive that they make uſe of Religion only as a Politick Engin, which they manage variouſly at their pleaſure, as it may be moſt ſerviceable to their Deſigns: And that there is no Oath, Teſt, or Obligation, which by the help of an Equivocation and a Diſtinction they cannot accept, and preſently evade or break through.

W. H.

FINIS.